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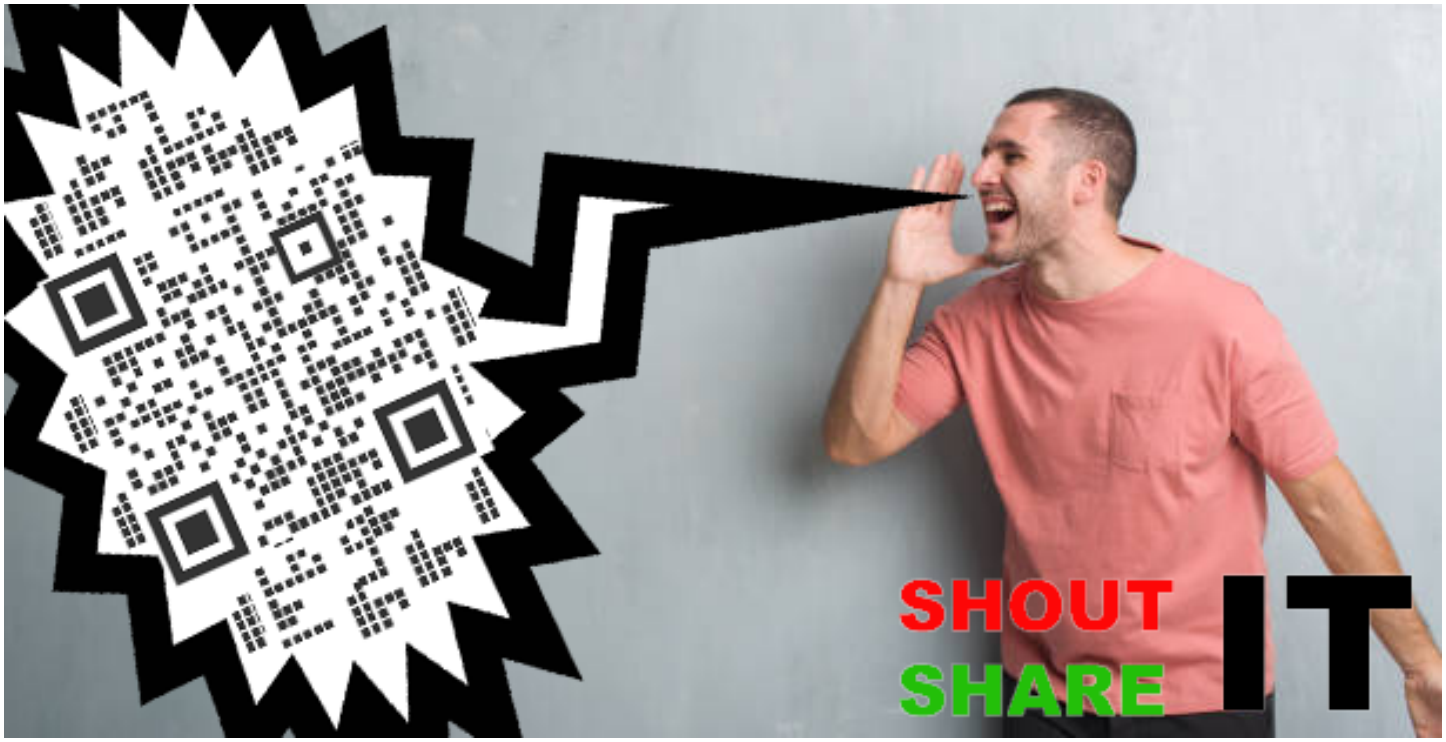
HOW TO GET PEOPLE TO LISTEN

MASTER THE ART OF CONFIDENT COMMUNICATION

MIKE McCLEMENT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How to get people to listen: Master the art of confident communication

By Mike McClement

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Introduction

Think of confident people you know. It's likely they all have one thing in common. When they talk, people listen.

How can *you* get your point across when it matters? How can *you* be engaging and interesting? And how can you get people to listen to *you*?

That's what this book is about. It will show you how to communicate with real confidence. Once you can do this, a whole host of new opportunities will open up for you. You'll be able to:

- Speak up without fearing what people think.
- Believe in yourself more and not feel inferior.
- Seize opportunities that you used to shy away from.
- Influence people and get them to take account of your point of view.

You'll get the most out of the book if you actively practise the techniques and tips I'm going to share with you. Learning how to come across confidently is a continuous process of watching, analysing and practising.

Throughout the book I give real examples of the challenges some of my students have faced (their names have been changed). You will be able to apply the learning to your own life. You'll be in a stronger position to address the actual situations you struggle with.

Before you start reading, think about those situations; the ones when you struggle to come across confidently. They could be 'everyday' situations or significant specific events. They could be in your personal life or your work life. This is important. The first step to dealing with a problem is to identify it.

You'll find it helpful to make a note of these situations. For example; I find it difficult to talk to 'John' at work. I find it hard to make conversation in a social situation. I feel very uncomfortable talking to people I've never met before. I feel embarrassed giving my opinion at meetings.

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Reflect regularly on your notes as you move on through the book. Think continually about how you can apply what you learn to these real life situations where you struggle to communicate confidently.

Here's a quick overview of what you'll learn:

Chapter 1 – Know how you naturally come across

The biggest mistake people who lack confidence make is they don't think about how they naturally come across; how they communicate when they're not consciously thinking about it. In this Chapter, we get to the bottom of why this is important.

Chapter 2 – Understanding your personal Communication Style

What does your Communication Style mean for you? Chapter 2 helps you answer this key question. You learn about the four main communication styles and discover how to interpret your score from the 'What's My Communication Style' Questionnaire.

Chapter 3 – Staying one step ahead

Get rid of any worries, feelings of inferiority or self-doubt. This Chapter helps you to put aside any mental barriers stopping you from communicating confidently.

Chapter 4 – Get people to listen to you

Why is it that some people don't seem to listen to you? In this Chapter you'll discover why you get on better with some people than others. You'll also learn a simple but effective technique for getting your point of view across confidently.

Chapter 5 - Position yourself for any situation

What makes someone really stand out when they're communicating? I share some practical techniques you can use every day. You'll be taking your communication skills to the next level.

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Chapter 6 – Taking the next steps

Having good communication skills will open a whole host of new opportunities for you. But it's just one step you'll need to take along the path to greater self-confidence. This Chapter touches on the other steps in the 4 Step Confidence Plan and gives you a handy checklist.

Chapter 1

Know how you naturally come across

Imagine you're at work and you've been given a new and exciting project. There's only one problem… you really struggle to get on with the colleague who's working on the project with you. Let's say your colleague is called Jane. In fact, you find Jane rude and arrogant. You and Jane have never seen eye to eye.
What do you do to get the project completed successfully? Let's say you start by having a meeting to clarify the objectives. Immediately you both disagree on the way the project should be run. From the very beginning, Jane controls the meeting. She dictates her opinions and doesn't give you a chance to speak.

You start wondering – how on earth will I be able to work on this project with Jane? Will we be able to agree on anything? How will I get my point of view across? Will it ever get completed?

This is a typical situation that many of my students find themselves in. They just can't speak up and get their point of view across. As a result their self-belief and self-esteem take a real hit. They even start to avoid people they find difficult. Ultimately, they miss out on opportunities.

Let's take a step back. Let's look at the same situation from Jane's point of view. Do you think she saw herself as rude and arrogant? No, Jane actually thought she was an assertive and confident person. She had absolutely no idea that the way she

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came across was affecting the way *you* felt and behaved. She had no idea that the impression *you* had of her was so different to the way she saw herself. Jane was just communicating the way she always did. In her mind it was the best way to get the job done.

In this Chapter you'll learn:

- Why it's important to understand the way you naturally communicate.
- The two main elements which make up confident communication.

Why it's important to understand the way you naturally communicate

Of course, we'd all like to think that our own way of communicating is the best way. Often, we don't consider that in some situations it might be better to communicate differently. We carry on regardless. This can mean the job not getting done or, even worse, conflict arising.

If you want to come across confidently, you need to understand the way you *naturally* communicate; how you come across to people instinctively. This is the way you communicate when you're not consciously thinking about it.

Unless you know your *natural* communication style, your confidence levels may well be affected when you're dealing with someone who communicates in a different way to you. It could be the reason you start to feel out of control, uncomfortable or nervous when you're talking to the person.

You may have heard the phrase 'personality clash'. What people often actually mean is 'communication style clash'. Understanding your natural communication style is the first step to dealing with this.

The two fundamental elements of confident communication

I want to start by dispelling a common myth about confident communication.

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Some people think that to come across confidently you have to be loud or extrovert. This couldn't be further from the truth. Some of the most confident communicators I know are very quiet people. Why is that?

Well, it's because communicating confidently is not just about speaking up and being heard. It's about listening too. Imagine for a moment that you're on a see-saw. On one side you have *listening* and on the other side *speaking*. Most people find that their natural style means they're stronger on one side than the other. To communicate with confidence you need to understand where you naturally sit on the see-saw so that you can compensate if necessary. If you stray too far one way – the see-saw will become unbalanced. It will tilt and you'll lose control.

Let me tell you about Andy and Karen. They sat on opposite ends of the see-saw.

Andy found that he sat too far on the listening side. He had problems committing himself to a point of view. He struggled to say anything meaningful whenever it involved giving his opinion. Andy's first thoughts focused on other peoples' opinions and needs rather than his own. Andy was a genuinely nice person but he made the mistake of thinking he would hurt peoples' feelings if he told them what *he* thought or wanted.

For Andy to communicate confidently, he needed to move closer to the middle of the seesaw. He needed to find a way of speaking up without thinking he was offending the other person.

Karen on the other hand sat too far on the speaking side. She put her point of view across so strongly that other people felt threatened by her behaviour. Her colleagues saw her as aggressive. She was actually shutting out other peoples' views and needs.

For Karen to communicate confidently, she needed to find the self-discipline to give others a chance to talk and express their opinions.

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I rarely meet people whose natural communication style means they find themselves nicely positioned in the middle of the see-saw. Most people have a natural leaning to one side or the other. They tend to prefer either to listen or to talk.

Communicating with real confidence means listening when appropriate and speaking when you have a point to make, even when you feel under pressure. It means getting the balance right.

If you watch confident people you'll see that they seem to be able to influence others around them. They do this by communicating in a way that suits the other person. This may not necessarily be their natural way of communicating.

Confident people know where they instinctively sit on the see-saw. When they communicate, they instinctively alter their communication style to maintain a balance. This means they feel comfortable and in control during a conversation. They know when to state their case and when to take account of the views of the other person.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- To be confident, it's essential to know how you naturally come across to people.
- Not knowing your natural communication style could be the reason why you lose control or feel uncomfortable in some situations.
- You don't have to be loud or extrovert to be confident.
- Confident people are prepared to speak up to make their point as well as listen when they should.
- Most people instinctively prefer to either speak or to listen.
- Truly confident people understand their natural leaning and compensate accordingly when they're under pressure.

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Chapter 2

Understanding your personal Communication Style

Remember Jane from the previous chapter? You never saw eye to eye. In fact, you had a communication style clash.
If you're aware of your instinctive communication style you can prevent these clashes.

Otherwise, it could be that just by being your normal self, and without even knowing it, you could…

- Make someone feel uncomfortable.
- Seem boring or disinterested.
- Appear rude.
- Look shy or embarrassed.

Once you know your natural communication style you can make sure that negative perceptions don't arise.

In this Chapter you'll learn:

- How to find out your natural communication style.
- What your scores in the 'What's My Communication Style' Questionnaire mean for you.

How to find out your natural Communication Style

You have a way of communicating that's unique to you. Over the years you've developed your own natural communication style. To feel confident and in control, you need to know what's good and what's bad about your style; in other words, you need to know your strengths and weaknesses in relation to how you communicate.

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Your objective now is to know and understand your own style. So, before you continue reading **you will need to complete our free 'What's My Communication Style' Questionnaire.**

You can find it here:

https://thinkconfidence.com/free-questionnaire/

What do your scores mean for you?

As you read on through the book, try to keep your scores at the forefront of your mind.

Before we look at each of the communication styles in detail, it's important to understand that there's no right or wrong style and no best or worst style. Take account not only of the styles you score high in (a high score is anything from 14 upwards) but also the ones you score low in (it's not unusual for people to score zero in a style). Your scores could be spread over all four styles or you might have a leaning towards one or two of the styles.

So let's have a look at the traits of the four styles and work out what they mean for you. Remember to take account of the traits of the styles you score low in as well as the ones you score high in. The higher you score in a style the more this would suggest you instinctively show the traits of that style when you're communicating and the lower you score the less you show them.

Methodical

If you score mainly in the Methodical style, your tendency is to want to listen, ask and then respond. You're precise, logical, analytical and detailed in the way you think and the way you communicate. If your score is high (14 or above) it's possible that others may see you as someone who gets bogged down in detail and who's not forward thinking. You may even appear bland to some people because you tend not to be very expressive in your body language or facial expressions.

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Animated

If your score orientates towards the Animated style your tendency is to talk rather than to listen. You're an expressive person whose natural want is to deliver your opinion before hearing what others have to say. You come across as lively, enthusiastic and persuasive. If your score is high, other people may see you as someone who exaggerates, misses detail on occasions or gets bored easily.

Sensitive

Scoring high in the Sensitive style suggests you're open in the way you communicate. It's probably quite easy for others to tell how you're feeling because you don't mind expressing your emotions. You're thoughtful, compassionate and caring in the way you come across and treat people. If your score is high, others may see you as over emotional and someone who gives in easily. You may even do your best to avoid conflict situations.

Upfront

Scoring mainly in the Upfront style suggests you tend to be straight-talking, direct, forthright and frank in the way you communicate. You have no problem telling people your thoughts even if you don't think they'll agree with you. If your score is high, others may see you as stubborn, argumentative, impatient and perhaps even rude. You tend not to be emotional and can perhaps be difficult to read. It's not that easy for others to tell what you're thinking or how you're feeling because you don't give much away through your body language or expression.

You'll notice on the chart that there are areas of overlap between style sectors. These show the behaviours that are common to both styles. It could be that you have a leaning towards the top or the bottom of the chart or to the left or right side

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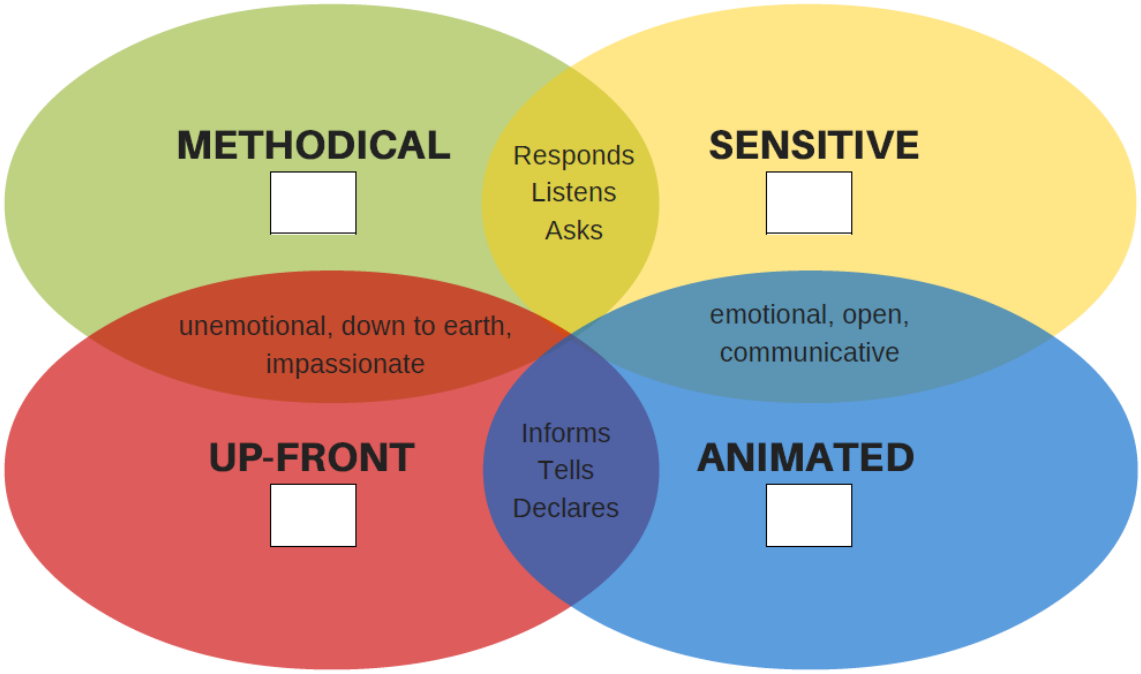
THE COMMUNICATION STYLE CHART



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What overlapping styles mean

Methodical / Sensitive

If you score mainly across the top of the chart in the Methodical and Sensitive sectors, when you're in a conversation your tendency may be to listen, ask and then perhaps respond. In other words, you probably prefer to wait for the other person to speak before you do. You might even describe yourself as shy if your scores are high.

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Upfront / Animated

If your scores orientate towards the bottom two sectors, that's the Upfront and Animated part of the chart, your tendency is likely to be to talk rather than to listen. In fact, if your scores here are very high, you probably don't listen much at all. So your natural inclination may be to deliver your opinion before hearing what others have to say.

Sensitive / Animated

Scoring to the right of the chart suggests you're expressive and open in the way you communicate. It's probably quite easy for others to tell how you're feeling because you don't mind expressing your emotions. If you score very high in these sectors, you may find your emotions getting the better of you on occasions.

Methodical / Upfront

Scoring to the left of the chart suggests you prefer to keep your cards close to your chest. You tend not to be emotional and some people might find you difficult to read on occasions. It's not that easy for others to tell what you're thinking or how you're feeling because you don't give much away through your body language or in terms of what you say.

So you should now have an understanding of the four communication styles and you should also have a feel for how *you* naturally communicate. You should also be aware if you have a leaning towards the top or bottom or towards the left or right of the chart. Don't forget how styles can overlap.

Before you move on, take some time to reflect on your own scores and what they might mean for you. Look back at the situations that you noted down at the beginning of the book. Think about your natural communication style and how it may have an impact in situations where you struggle to communicate confidently.

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Knowing your natural communication style helps prevent 'personality' clashes.
- If you are aren't aware of your communication style you could give negative messages without even knowing it.
- You can find out your communication style by taking the 'What's My Communication Style' Questionnaire https://thinkconfidence.com/free-questionnaire/
- The four styles are described as Methodical, Sensitive, Animated and Upfront.
- You need to take account of the styles you scored high in as well as those you scored low in.
- Your scores could show you have a leaning toward one style or an overlapping of styles.

Chapter 3

Staying one step ahead

Congratulations, you're now in the driving seat. You have control. You know and understand how you naturally communicate. In Chapter 4, I'm going to show you how to use this knowledge to get people to listen to you. But first, there's something we need to clarify. Do you have the right mind-set to communicate confidently?

There's no point knowing how you naturally communicate unless you have the right mind-set to use it!

There are certain mental barriers that may hold you back when you try to communicate confidently. These are:

- **Peoples' perceptions;** worrying what people will think of you.
- **Self-doubt;** the fear of failing or being wrong.
- **Inferiority**; feeling that others are better than you.

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These are barriers you will need to break down. They will stop you moving forward. Are they affecting *you*? Be honest – do you sometimes think to yourself…

"If I say or do that… people will think I'm stupid, people won't listen to me, people will think I'm selfish, I'll embarrass myself…"

You must deal with these mental barriers if you want to stay ahead and communicate with real confidence.

In this Chapter we'll explore what you can do to strengthen your mind-set when you're afraid of putting your communication skills into action. You'll learn how to:

- Stop worrying about what people think of you.
- Deal with self-doubt.
- Tackle feelings of inferiority.

Stop worrying about what people think of you

Wondering what people think of you is a natural human reaction. *Worrying* what people think of you isn't.

I was running a confidence course recently. I remember Fatima walking in at the beginning. I remember her because she sat down and looked comfortable straightaway. Most people look a little anxious at first.

Everyone introduced themselves and explained why they'd come. Fatima explained *very confidently* that she had absolutely no self-confidence. She said she felt embarrassed whenever she had to talk to a group of people. I recall her actual words, "This is a great example … you can see it for yourself by the way I look now … I'm just a bag of nerves."

Then we shared peoples' perceptions of each other. Fatima was staggered to hear that, without exception, all the people in the room perceived her to be a *confident* person. She genuinely could not believe it. She thought people were trying to be kind to her because, really, they thought she was so awful. She'd built up such

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a strong false impression of how she looked and sounded that it took quite a while for us to convince her that we weren't trying to be nice – we were actually telling the truth. Fatima was worrying unnecessarily.

Worrying what people think of you is a complete waste of your energy and time. *Wondering* isn't. It's important to know how you come across as it will help you identify any distracting habits. But you must not *worry* about it. Worrying will stop you moving forward and cause a snow-ball effect in your mind. Your negative thoughts will build up and eventually spiral out of control. This can be damaging. Like Fatima, it may well lead you to create a false perception of yourself. It might even be responsible for your self-esteem taking a hit.

Your worry is caused by you over-thinking things. You need to stop over-analysing (and potentially coming to the wrong conclusions) if you want to communicate confidently.

Try to catch yourself when you start over-thinking. Recognise this pattern of abuse and do something to overcome it. For example, every time you find yourself worrying what people think, force yourself to compliment another aspect of your personality. There's *always* something good about what you're doing or saying. You just need the self-discipline to look for it and acknowledge it.

Stop doubting yourself – Don't let a fear of failure hold you back

You'd be superhuman if you didn't doubt yourself on occasions. When something goes wrong or doesn't go according to plan it's only natural to question yourself.

But have you ever tried to work out *why* you doubt yourself? Often it's because someone else has sown that seed of doubt in you. Why listen to someone who talks negatively unless they've got something constructive to say?

If they do have a valid reason to criticise you, listen and reflect on what you can do to rectify it. Don't let it stop you moving on though. And don't take it personally.

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Sometimes self-doubt creeps in because you make a mistake or you fail at something. It's not surprising if this affects you in some way. No one likes failing. But the reality is we all fail on occasions, even confident people. The difference is that people who retain their confidence try again, even after significant failures.

To conquer self-doubt you need to *recognise failure as a positive thing*. Sounds mad I know. Think logically about it. It's happened. You can't change it or make it better. All you *can* do is move on. But don't do that until you've learnt what you can from it. Use the lessons to make sure it doesn't happen again. Then have another go. It's the only way of proving to yourself that you *can* succeed at it. This is what confident people do to remain confident. They accept that things may go wrong and try again until they succeed. You'll never be a confident communicator if you don't practise communicating confidently!

Jesse, a sales executive did exactly that. She told me about a sales presentation she'd never forgotten. It was ingrained in her mind. In her words it was the "most embarrassing thing that had ever happened to her". She hadn't prepared well enough and was asked some difficult questions she couldn't answer. She went red, started sweating, shaking, stumbling her words – everything went to pot. She couldn't face doing another presentation "ever".

We talked about dealing with failure. How trying again was so important. So she did – she prepared better too. And it went well. Her confidence started to return.

Ditch any feelings of inferiority

Try to base your expectations of yourself on what *you do* and your own aspirations, not what others are doing. There is nothing positive to be gained from comparing yourself to other people.

I find one of the main reasons people lack self-confidence is that they see around them a completely different world to the real one. They see the world as a place where everyone else is superior to them. They make the assumption that other people have more authority than them and that other peoples' rights prevail above

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theirs.

But *Why?*

It may well be the case that some people are more ‘senior’ to you in terms of position or rank. However, this does not mean that they are ‘superior’ to you in the sense that their rights and needs are more important.

Confident people don’t get fazed by this. They treat everyone the same, regardless of rank or seniority. Of course, they show the appropriate degree of respect to seniors but they don’t change their behaviour when communicating with them. People who feel inferior tend to lose sight of this. They forget that senior people have no ‘rights’ over you, even though, particularly in a work environment, they may have a degree of ‘power’ over you in terms of your role and responsibilities.

I have a friend called Charlie. For some time, each time we met, he would talk about our mutual friend, Will. Charlie would start the conversation in the same way. *Did you know Will’s done this… Will’s bought that… Will has this…*

Charlie constantly compared his own achievements to Will. As a result, Charlie started to believe that he wasn’t good enough. He was less worthy than Will.

Some people just can’t help comparing themselves to other people. The problem arises when they only compare themselves to people who they deem to be better, luckier, happier or more successful than them. No wonder they begin to feel inferior!

There’s just no sense in doing what Charlie did. You must learn to see yourself as an individual with your own unique strengths and weaknesses, just like everyone else. Stop comparing yourself to others and you’ll start to feel on a par with them, regardless of their ‘achievements’.

You should try and learn from others though, particularly those who are good at what they do. But never compare yourself to them. It is a false economy. You have your strengths, they have theirs. You have your weaknesses, they have theirs too. No one is perfect.

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My school friend, Simon, always achieved higher grades than me in every subject. I remember feeling inferior to him in lessons. It's not until recently that I found out that Simon felt the same way about me when we were playing sport. It's easy to feel inferior if someone is better at something than you but remember - we're all human. Respect other people's strengths but remember that they also have weaknesses. If you feel inferior draw on your own qualities and strengths rather than constantly thinking about your weaknesses.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- You need to have the right mind-set to communicate confidently.
- Negative thinking will create a mental barrier that could hold you back.
- Over analysing what people think of you can cause you to worry unnecessarily.
- Doubting your abilities is normal. Allowing this to stop you communicating confidently isn't.
- Recognise failure as a positive thing by learning from it and trying again.
- Stop comparing yourself to others to overcome feelings of inferiority.

Chapter 4

Get people to listen to you

Do people talk over you? Do you sometimes find that nobody wants to listen to what *you* have to say?

Imagine you're at a work meeting. It's a large group and there's a discussion going on. Everyone's contributing and making their point. You have something to say. You

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have a good point to make. You speak up but no one seems to listen to you. Why is that? You have as much right to speak as anyone else.

You're not alone. This is one of the main issues I hear from my students. They tell me….

- People don't take any notice when I speak.
- I get talked over.
- I have something to say but I just can't say it.

Why is it that some people just don't seem to listen to you? That's exactly what you'll find out in this Chapter. You'll learn:

- Why you can communicate better with some people than others.
- A simple technique to help you get your point across confidently.

Why you can communicate better with some people than others

People tend to be most comfortable talking to or working with people who have a similar communication style to them. That's because people who communicate like you behave in a way that you can relate to. They do the things you do and don't distract you or frustrate you by coming across in a way that makes you feel uncomfortable.

The problems tend to arise when you're dealing with someone who has a different style to you.

Let's reflect for a moment on your communication style scores. Do you have a high score in any of the styles? A high score could be anything from 14 upwards. People who score high in a particular style are more likely to come up against 'communication style clashes'.

I'd like to tell you about Sarah and Josie. They scored high in different communication styles.

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Sarah scored 16 in the Methodical style and Josie scored 14 in the Animated style

Sarah likes detail and order. She tends to be analytical and precise in the way she thinks and speaks. She prefers to base her opinions on facts and practicalities rather than concepts. She's sometimes seen as quiet in character but when she speaks it's worth listening to her because she's thought carefully about what she's going to say.

Sometimes she has a tendency to get bogged down in detail and lose sight of the longer-term perspective. She tends to think on a day-to-day basis rather than consider her plans in the longer term. She isn't naturally expressive and doesn't display a great deal of emotion, even when she's annoyed or upset about something. She may even appear boring or disinterested to some people whereas actually, she's neither, she's just being herself.

Josie's naturally a very enthusiastic person who has a lively character. She likes to talk, can be quite persuasive and is interesting to listen to. She has an energetic way about her and is sometimes described as the 'life and soul of the party'.

She can sometimes get carried away with herself in terms of having new ideas and to some people her excited and, on occasions, loud behaviour can be a distraction. She tends to think in terms of generalities rather than detail and practicality. She also has a tendency to exaggerate and be a little over-dramatic. Some people might even see her ideas verging on unrealistic.

Sarah and Josie found themselves working together on a playgroup committee. The committee had made a decision to buy some new furniture for the group. Sarah and Josie both volunteered to take responsibility together for sourcing and buying it. It wasn't long before the problems started. Sarah approached the task completely differently to Josie.

Immediately, Josie started thinking about where each piece of furniture would look best. Whereas Sarah's first thought was about when the two of them could meet to discuss the details and the best approach. Josie thought this was completely

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unnecessary. As far as she was concerned it was pretty obvious what they needed so they might as well just go to Ikea and buy it.

Sarah wasn't happy at all. Being a methodical person, she wanted to do some proper research to make sure they bought exactly what the playgroup needed. She wanted to get the best deals. She thought it would be sensible to do some measurements first to make sure what they bought fitted through the door. Thinking at this level of detail didn't even enter Josie's mind. She was more interested in how the playgroup would look once they had the new furniture than whether or not it would fit through the door.

Sarah and Josie's different styles meant they approached the task completely differently. In fact, they just couldn't see eye to eye and ended up doing nothing at all until someone else stepped in to help.

People who want to communicate with confidence need to use their knowledge of the communication styles to stop these 'clashes' taking place. Confident people can adapt the way they communicate to suit the other person. You might think that this means you're giving in.

You're wrong.

When you adapt your style to suit the other person, it means you gain control. You then have the power to influence a situation.

I don't call that giving in, I call that being clever.

Before we discuss adapting your style, there is something I'd like you to do.

Take a moment to think about how *your* natural communication style might clash with family, friends or work colleagues.

Reflect back on Chapter 2. Remind yourself of the traits of each style. Knowing and understanding the traits of each style will help you identify the natural styles of other people you communicate with regularly.

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If you're not sure which style they are, why not ask them to complete the 'What's My Communication Style' Questionnaire.

A simple technique to help you get your point of view across

Becoming a confident communicator reminds me of how a lion cub learns the skill of hunting from its mother. The cub watches her make a kill, it works out how she does it and then has a go. The cub may not be successful at first but to survive, it will keep trying until it succeeds.

You will need to do the same if you want to master the art of confident communication. Watch. Analyse. Practise.

Watch

Take time to study people. You'll need to be observant when you're talking to people. You're trying to take in as much as you can, as quickly as you can, about their verbal and non-verbal behaviour. Your senses need to detect when you're dealing with someone who has a strong natural communication style that's different to yours. You're looking at the other person's body language, facial expressions, tone, pace, volume of voice, energy level, enthusiasm, expressiveness and emotion.

Analyse

Try to identify their communication style. Think back to Chapter 2 and the Communication Style Chart. Ideally, you'll be able to gauge roughly where you think the person would fall on this chart. Once you've worked this out, you can start to think about how similar, or perhaps different, their style is to *your* natural style. The more different they are, the more you'll need to adapt your style to suit them.

Practise

You've worked out their style. The time has come to adapt your own style to mirror theirs. You'll find it harder to mirror the other person's style if you personally don't like it or feel comfortable with it. Bear in mind that the higher you score in your own style, the more unnatural it will feel to mirror someone who is different to you.

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The '**Adapting and Mirroring**' technique is a great way to overcome a clash of styles and build rapport with other people quickly. It's absolutely true that the more you can mirror the other person's communication style, the more comfortable they will feel in your presence. This means you will have more influence in the conversation. Ultimately, you will be listened to.

The 'Adapting and Mirroring' technique in action

Jay felt uncomfortable talking and working with certain people. He particularly struggled with Carrie, a colleague who he worked closely with on certain projects.

Jay's scores were: Methodical 7 Sensitive 13 Upfront 4 Animated 4

When he thought about it, he came to the conclusion Carrie would probably score high in the Upfront sector on the chart.

So whereas Jay was a patient person who was prepared to listen and take account of Carrie's thoughts and concerns. Carrie was a forthright, loud and, in Jay's eyes, formidable person who preferred to talk rather than to listen to someone else's point of view.

Jay made a conscious decision to adapt his sensitive style and to mirror Carrie's upfront style the next time they met. Whereas before he'd let her dominate the conversation, this time he looked her in the eye, spoke louder than normal, didn't waffle and explained his thoughts clearly and concisely.

Having scored 13 in the sensitive sector, Jay didn't find this easy because adapting meant behaving very differently to his natural preferred style. It worked brilliantly for him though.

He walked away from the meeting feeling he'd achieved what he wanted. Subsequently, with his new-found confidence, Jay was able to talk openly to Carrie. He was surprised to hear that she actually preferred him to be more upfront. She found it easier to work with people like that as she liked to know where she stood.

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Sheila also completed the Communication Style Questionnaire.

Sheila's scores were: Methodical 5 Sensitive 6 Upfront 5 Animated 12

It had always puzzled Sheila why some people just didn't seem to take her seriously. It had never occurred to her that it might be something to do with her natural communication style. Sheila was a very expressive person who liked talking but tended to exaggerate on occasions. She liked to share her ideas with people and got bored easily with any discussion that involved day-to-day practicalities.

She was so lively and enthusiastic about everything that some people found this completely over the top and a real distraction. Sheila found this confusing because she considered these to be positive traits.

Sheila thought about her friends and work colleagues and tried to place each one of them on the Communication Style Chart. She began to realise that the people she got on best with were the people who fell in the animated sector of the chart. In other words, she got on best with people who thought, talked and approached life like she did.

What she also started to see was that the people she clashed with tended to be the opposite to her. For example, she found Pat, one of her work colleagues incredibly frustrating because she never showed any emotion. Pat always had the same expression and never seemed to get excited about anything – even good things. It got to the point where Sheila couldn't help seeing Pat as a negative person. What's more, in Sheila's eyes, Pat always seemed paranoid about detail. Everything had to be organised and in the right place.

Sheila was pretty certain that Pat would score high in the Methodical style. The direct opposite to her own style. So she started to think about what she might need to do to mirror Pat's style. Thinking this through made her realise that, actually, Pat wasn't a negative person at all. Pat just communicated and behaved differently to her. Although it was a huge effort because her own style was so strong and so different to Pat's, Sheila vowed to herself that she'd try to mirror Pat's Methodical style whenever she worked with her.

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She did this by trying to control her emotion and tempering her loud and lively approach when she was with Pat. She also made a conscious effort not to get carried away with her ideas or forget to ask and then listen to Pat's thoughts. She had to remind herself to have a structure to what she was saying so that Pat didn't think she was waffling. This helped her to cover the level of detail that Pat liked.

These simple changes in the way Sheila behaved made a huge difference, not just for her relationship with Pat but also for her self-confidence. She noticed that not just Pat but quite a few other people who didn't take her seriously before now started to ask her opinion. They'd also listen more attentively to what she was saying.

What if you have a balanced Communication Style score?

It's possible you might have a fairly balanced score in the questionnaire. Josh is a good example of someone with a balanced score.

Josh's scores were: Methodical 7 Sensitive 6 Upfront 7 Animated 8

Josh's scores were balanced throughout the sectors. He falls into a minority of people who don't have a particular leaning towards one or two of the styles. In some ways Josh is lucky because he doesn't have to make the adjustment others need to make in order to mirror someone else's style. After all, having the same score throughout indicates that he naturally portrays all the styles in a measured way.

However, if your scores are balanced you shouldn't be complacent. You will still need to consider the styles of people around you. Just being your normal self might not be enough if the other person strongly displays the traits of a particular style. You'll need to adapt so that your style matches the strength of the other person.

So if your scores are fairly balanced, you'll need to have the awareness and confidence to pick which style best suits the situation.

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Dealing with people who have a different communication style to you can be challenging.
- Try to work out the styles of people who you spend time with or work closely with.
- Watch and analyse other peoples behaviour to work out their style.
- Be aware of the people who have a different style to you.
- Adapting your own style to mirror the other person is clever. It's not giving in.
- When you use the adapting and mirroring technique, you gain control and will have more influence.
- You may still need to adapt even if your own style scores are balanced across all four styles.

Chapter 5

Positioning yourself for any situation

You're ready to start communicating with real confidence. You know your own natural communication style. You know how to work out the styles of other people. You've practised the mirroring technique. It's now time to put everything into action. It's time to use your newly found knowledge in the situations that challenge you most.
But wait, is that enough? Can you do anything else to help you communicate confidently? What can you do to really stand out when you're talking? It's now time to make some finishing touches.

I was once walking through a small market town when I saw a local man standing on a wall addressing a few people. I was curious so I stopped to watch. The crowd grew and I stood mesmerised for over 20 minutes. I felt happy and excited. I expect you're thinking… It must have been a very interesting talk. The thing is I can't tell you what the man was talking about. In fact, I had absolutely no idea what he was saying. You

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see, I was on holiday in Italy and my Italian is almost non-existent. It wasn't the verbal message that captivated me. The stranger relayed an emotional message that drew me in. He did this through his body language.

Your body language is a powerful ally. Use it effectively and your emotions will become contagious. You will find that people start to single you out so they can listen to what *you* have to say.

In this Chapter, we're going to look at some non-verbal forms of communication which help to inject emotion into the way you communicate. I'll share some techniques that you can use every day. They will not only help you to come across confidently but they will help you feel more confident too.

Your eyes say everything

You're talking to someone and they keep looking over your shoulder. They're obviously not listening. In fact, you suspect they are scanning the room to see if there is anyone more interesting to talk to.

How does this make you feel? Not good, that's for sure. So why would someone do that?

Lack of eye contact can be due to one of two things – shyness or distraction.

In both situations it sends a negative message. Here are just some of the messages poor eye contact can convey about a person:

They don't believe in what they say. They don't know what they're talking about. They look shifty and untrustworthy. They aren't interested in the audience. They look nervous.

Creating and maintaining good eye contact is essential to coming across confidently and communicating emotion.

Our eyes are the most expressive part of our face. You should use them as much as possible. They have the ability to convey emotions such as interest, concern, warmth

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and credibility. Imagine talking to someone wearing sunglasses. It's much harder to read their feelings.

If you find your eyes wandering, pay attention to how you are feeling. Focus your attention on the present moment. Don't be tempted to let your mind wander or your eyes roam the room. Your aim is to make the person you are talking to think you are only interested in them. You want them to think they're the most important person in the room.

I rarely meet people who are naturally good at using eye contact effectively. The majority have to work hard at it to get it right. It's worth it though because, once you've cracked it, you'll see a huge difference in the way people respond to you.

Remember that good eye contact tells the person you're aware, you care and you're in control.

Have a confident posture

My students often ask me… *does the way I sit or stand really make a difference to how confidently I come across?* Hell, yes.

When someone shows confidence through their body language, we automatically assume they have something to be confident about. In turn, we think that means they must be very sure of the message they are relaying to us. It makes us take notice. It makes us want to listen to them.

The way we use our body language goes back to the time man began to exist. It is now hard-wired within us. Think about how animals make themselves look more powerful. They find a way of looking bigger. A bear may stand on its hind legs, a frog may puff itself up.

The more space we take, the more confident we look. Quite often, confident people will sit side ways on their chair or try to take over two chairs by spreading their arm across the back of the adjacent chair. Have you ever watched Simon Cowell on the

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X Factor? Watch how he puts his arm on the back of the chair next to him. This is his way of claiming more space. He is stating his authority, power and confidence.

To show confidence in the way you sit or stand you need to claim as much space as possible but make sure you feel comfortable doing it. Try out different positions. Find a way to sit or stand that feels right for you.

Eliminate distracting habits

Picture Barack Obama walking into a room. He walks in slowly and calmly. He takes a look around the room before he starts to speak. He is composed and in control. He exudes confidence. You *want* to listen to him.

Now imagine him walking into the room quickly. His head is bobbing, he is fidgeting with his shirt. He starts to talk. His first word is “umm.” He looks restless and anxious. You start to think he’s unsure of his message. Why *should* you listen to him?

It’s the same person with the same message but by the way he is using his body language your desire to listen to him has changed.

Confident people have an element of composure and stillness about them. They are aware of any distracting habits they possess and keep them under control.

I gave a presentation recently which I prepared and practised. I was really chuffed with myself, I thought it went well. Yet, when I watched it back, I found myself squirming inside. I was astounded. The way I came across was completely different to the way I thought. I noticed that I spent a lot of time touching my head and looking down. It made me realise that, while I was giving my presentation, I wasn’t even aware of making those distracting movements.

The first step to eliminating any distracting habits is awareness. You need to know how you look and sound to other people when you’re talking. There are three ways you can do this:

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- Ask somebody who you know well.
- Film yourself.
- Complete the Think Confidence Reality Check Questionnaire.

Once you are consciously aware of them, you can mentally prepare yourself to keep any distracting habits in check.

Smiling also helps

A simple smile is a powerful cue that transmits friendliness, warmth, and approachability. It's amazing what a difference a smile can make. I'm sure you've heard this before. Well, it's true, very true; a smile can even change the way you feel, particularly when you're under pressure or lacking confidence.

By smiling you are exuding warmth and positivity. You will appear as a genuine person. You will find that more people will want to talk to you and listen to what you have to say.

You may be surprised to hear that studies have proved that you get the same positive benefits when you actually force yourself to smile as you do when you smile naturally. That's because your brain can't tell the difference between a posed smile and a genuine smile.

Smiling can also stop stress from increasing. The act of smiling starts a chain reaction; it causes your brain to stimulate your body to release endorphins and serotonin. These help to combat feelings of stress and make you feel calmer and more in control. One obvious sign of this can be a reduction in your pulse rate. Try taking your pulse before and after smiling for a few moments and you'll see what I mean.

Most people instinctively react to seeing a smile by smiling themselves. Watch people interacting and you'll see this happening. Feeling good is infectious.

How often do you smile? The next time you're having a conversation try to consciously monitor how often you naturally smile.

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Be expressive

Your facial expressions can convey a whole host of messages to people about your emotions, your feelings, your confidence levels and your interpretation of their message. Depending on their natural communication style, positive facial expressions come more naturally to some people than others.

High animated style scorers tend naturally to be very expressive and open in their facial expressions. Whereas high methodical scorers tend to be less expressive and more ‘private’. Methodical people don’t give much away at all in terms of what they’re thinking or how they’re feeling.

The human face is incredibly expressive. It can communicate countless emotions without even saying a word. And, unlike some forms of non-verbal communication, facial expressions are universal. The facial expressions for happiness, sadness, anger, surprise, fear, and dislike are the same across cultures.

Try thinking for a moment about how much a person can convey with just a facial expression. For instance a frown can signal dislike or confusion, whereas a smile can indicate approval or understanding. And don’t forget of course that sometimes, your facial expressions can reveal your true feelings about something without you realising. During a meeting, you might say you’re happy and you understand what to do, but the look on your face may tell people otherwise.

Try watching people you know who are good at speaking in public. Look carefully at their facial expressions. Simple actions like a raised eyebrow, a smile or just a sideways glance can make a huge difference to the message they want to send out.

Using your face to its maximum advantage is an essential part of making you look and feel more confident. Using your facial expressions effectively also helps you to clarify your message and communicate your emotion.

Start practising straightaway. The next time you speak to someone face to face, consciously think about your facial expression. Ask yourself… am I sending out the right messages? In other words, is my expression changing during the conversation?

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Is it reflecting how I'm truly feeling? Is it helping me to look positive? Is it helping me to look confident?

Using your voice

I have a good friend who loves fishing. I met him one evening and he was beside himself with excitement. He was desperate to tell me about his recent trip to Florida. He immediately started to recall a story about a Marlin he'd caught. I am passionate about fishing too and, although I was interested in his tale, I found my mind wandering. I had to use all my energy to remain focused and listen to him.

Later that evening, I reflected on the story. I found it difficult to recall any precise detail. I realised that this was because of the way he told the story. Although it was the highlight of his holiday, he recounted it in a way that made it sound like a regular everyday event. Why was that? The reason was simply that he didn't use any fluctuation in his voice.

Vocal fluctuation can make a huge difference to the way you come across. You can vary your voice by pitch (high or low), volume (loud or quiet), tone (resonant or hollow), tempo (fast or slow) or rhythm (fluid or staccato).

By just varying your voice you can make a story move from sounding dull to sounding exciting. As a result, people will be more inclined to listen to you.

Does your voice sound monotone?

Try recording yourself. Say the same sentence but vary your voice each time. Try a different speed, pitch and volume. See what a difference it makes.

You don't have to be talking all the time

Do you hate silences in conversations? Do they make you feel awkward and embarrassed? Do you feel the onus is always on you to say something?

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Using silences in your speech can actually make you sound confident. That's because if people are expecting you to say something and yet they see that you look comfortable with the silence, you will look more in control. I'm not talking about minutes of silence here, just a few seconds.

Don't fall into the trap of filling the silence with noise. A lot of people feel so uncomfortable with the silences in a conversation that they fill them by saying something completely unnecessary or meaningless. Or, they fill the silence by umming.

Instead, use the silence to do one of several things:

- Think or gather yourself if you're distracted or struggling for a word.
- If you're in a meeting or giving a speech, look at your notes and check what you're going to say next.
- Make eye contact. Look at the audience or the person you are talking to.
- Breathe. Take a good deep breath.

Taking good breaths while you're speaking is vital to sounding confident. Most people think the reason your voice sounds juddery when you're nervous is to do with your mental state. What they don't realise is that actually nervousness in your voice comes as a direct result of you not getting enough air in your lungs. So take the opportunity to get a good breath during the a silence in a conversation. Your voice will sound a lot stronger if you're not snatching for breaths.

So if you want to use silence effectively to make you look and sound confident, you must discipline yourself to accept silence and then make sure you breathe.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Using your body language effectively helps to set you apart from others.
- Poor eye contact sends negative messages.
- Very few people are naturally good at using eye contact. Everyone can learn it.

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- Posture matters. Use space to communicate confidence. Be big.
- Make sure you are aware of any distracting habits you may have.
- Smile as much as possible. Even a forced smile helps you to look and feel positive.
- Use your facial expressions to reinforce your feelings and clarify your message.
- Fluctuate your voice to sound engaging.
- Be comfortable with silence.

Chapter 6

Taking the next steps

As you use the skills you've learnt in this book your confidence will steadily grow. Those close to you will notice a difference in the way you come across. You will soon be communicating with confidence without even thinking about it.

Here's a checklist to help keep you on track over the next few weeks. Reflect on these points regularly and practise what you've learnt. If things don't go according to plan, you must try again. Use this list to help you reflect on what and why things went wrong. Learn from your mistakes and have another go.

Nobody is just born a confident communicator. It's a skill you learn.

Checklist

✔Make a note of any people/situations where you struggle to communicate confidently.

✔Continually remind yourself that you will approach them differently from now on.

✔Think about your own natural communication style whenever you are in a conversation

✔Watch and analyse. Identify the natural communication style of the other person.

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✔ Adapt your own style when you need to communicate confidently with people who have a different style to you.

✔ If you fail at something, try again. Learn and move on.

✔Be consciously aware of negative thinking. Stop it before it spirals out of control.

✔Be aware of any distracting habits you have. Keep them under control.

✔Remember to smile more and use your facial expressions and voice engagingly.

✔Remember to use your body language to inject emotion into the way you communicate.

Continuing your journey to greater self-confidence

Having good communication skills will open a whole host of new opportunities for you. But this is just one step along the path to greater self-confidence.

In my 4 Step Confidence Plan, I have outlined the other essential steps you'll need to take. I've included a brief summary of the 4 Steps below. If you'd like to delve deeper, you'll find a whole host of free and useful resources by visiting our website http://think-confidence.com.

Step 1 – Staying Positive

As you start building your path there are certain things that may get in your way. They could try to stop you moving forward. I call them confidence killers. It's essential to deal with them first. If you don't they may well try to pull you back.

My confidence killers are: negativity, low self-esteem and self-doubt.

Killer #1 Negativity.

Negativity is your number one enemy. It's the first thing you need to learn to deal with. You must stamp it out. I cannot stress this enough.

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The truth is we can all be positive for an hour, a day, or even a week. It's staying positive that's hard. It involves training your brain to recognise, react and deal with negative thoughts. It's essential to eliminate negative thoughts before they spiral out of control. Negativity will happily overtake your desire to be more confident.

Killer #2 Low self-esteem.

Do you spend countless hours wishing you could fix yourself? Maybe you think; my nose is too big, I'm too fat, I'm boring. Do you seek approval for everything you do? Maybe you convince yourself that you are not worthy of your friends or that you don't deserve to be happy.

Many of my students who tell me they lack confidence have a very low opinion of themselves. Their self-esteem has hit rock-bottom.

There's only one answer to this (and there's no getting out of it if you want to move forward) … you'll need to learn to have self-love. In other words, you need to feel happy in your own skin.

That can be a really scary thought for some people and one of the hardest challenges they face on their journey. You'll need to work hard at this if you want to move on. The truth is that unless you take charge of yourself you could be your own worst enemy.

Killer #3 Self-Doubt.

We touched on this very briefly in Chapter 3.

Too many very capable people lack faith in their own abilities. This stops them doing the things they really want to do. The main reason for this? A fear of failure. The thought of getting it wrong is enough to stop them doing it.

Self-doubt usually stems from someone else. A parent or teacher perhaps. A seed is sown, often in childhood. That seed grows and raises its head whenever a challenge arises.

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Don't get me wrong. Fearing failure is not all bad. For some people, a little self-doubt can be a good thing. It can increase the amount of effort you are willing to exert to achieve your goal. It can actually spur you on to create something great.

But it's a fine balance. To continue to build your path; you'll need to keep any self-doubt in check.

Step 2 – Good Communication Skills

This book should really help you with this step. It's important to remember that confident communication is just as much about listening as it is about speaking. Developing good communication skills is a vital step on your journey. If you would like to develop these skills further you can start by taking our Assertiveness Style Questionnaire.

Step 3 – Self-perception

Have you ever wondered how you really come across? I'm talking about the way you look, sound and act. We briefly touched on the importance of being aware of any distracting habits in Chapter 5. This step is about really getting to know yourself. It's about comparing your self-perception to the perception others have of you.

Understanding how other people see you means you are in a position to control their perception of you.

Making assumptions about yourself is dangerous. If you get it wrong, it could mean the difference between success and failure. On the flip side, you could be worrying unnecessarily. Most people I meet actually come across more confidently than they think.

So to complete Step 3, you'll need to take a long hard honest look at yourself. Then compare your self-perception to that of the people who know you best. You can do this by receiving anonymous and honest feedback from our Reality Check Questionnaire.

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Step 4 – Being Confident

Step 4 is about the physical side of confidence. It's about having charisma and influence.

I gave you a few tips in Chapter 5 but there are lots more exercises and techniques you can use to help you.

Your body and voice are essential components to helping you act and look confident. To be truly confident you need to use these effectively. They will help you to make a great impression, stand out and be engaging. You will be able to look and act like a confident person in any situation.

Go for it!

So building your confidence means practising whenever you get the chance. Don't just wait for opportunities to come along. Actively seek out chances to try out the skills I've introduced you to. You will never gain more confidence by sitting back and hoping for the best.

Think of your journey to greater self-confidence like a hurdle race. You're crouching at the start waiting for the starter's gun. You can see the hurdles set out in front of you. Imagine each one represents a challenge. A challenge where you need to communicate with confidence in order to succeed.

You know the technique to jump each hurdle or complete each challenge; you've learnt it in this book. Now all you have to do is commit yourself. Positive thinking will help you with this. The hurdles look high, the challenges will test you. Thinking positively will help you overcome any self-doubt.

You'll need momentum too. You don't want to be coming to a juddering halt between hurdles. If you stop running, imagine how difficult it will be to get going again and to take the next hurdle; your next challenge.

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If you clip a hurdle, maybe even knock one over, don't keep looking back. Think about why you hit it. Learn from your mistake. Then adapt your technique for the next one.

Eventually you'll complete every hurdle. Imagine how you'll feel. Imagine the confident feeling you'll experience when you can overcome these challenges.

This is how to get people to listen to you. You have a plan. Now practise, practise, practise. Very soon you will be communicating with confidence naturally.